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CC18 Emergency Flood Information...Salvaging Flooded Livestock Feed

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The principal danger from feeding hay, grain, or forage that has been wet comes from changes in the feed due to mold, putrefaction, and fermentation. If the feed was wet only recently and can be dried quickly, there is much less danger than if the dampness has been of several days or weeks duration.

Feeds that are slightly musty or partly spoiled are more likely to injure horses than cattle. Hogs have a greater tolerance for spoiled feeds, but there is a distinct risk in using feed that is spoiled to any degree. Feed exposed to extensive water damage is likely to be lower in nutrient value. Livestock may tolerate some quantities of damaged feed. Such feed may be used as an emergency measure until supplies of sound feed can be obtained. The principal danger is from digestive disturbances and so-called forage poisoning.

Dirt in considerable quantities tends to make feed unpalatable. In some cases it may be removed by sifting, shaking, or other means.

Grain Under Government Loan

When stored grain under Government Loan is damaged due to flooding, contact your county A. S. C. office at once to determine your responsibility. Damage due to flooding of grain under loan may be assumed by the government. The owner is held responsible for grain stored on the farm under the Purchase Agreement Program.

GRAIN

Grain that has been flooded will begin to mold and heat very soon. This may develop to the point of spontaneous combustion within a short time. Dry portions of this grain in the pile or bin should be removed and stored separately.

There are four alternative methods for handling wet grain:

1. The quickest method for saving grain is to get it to a commercial drier as soon as possible.

2. If dry storage is available, use a natural air drying system with a metal perforated floor or a lateral duct system and put the grain over it to a depth of not more than 6 feet. Use a crop drying fan to force air up through the grain for drying. If supplemental heat is available, it should be used only during periods of high humidity. When used, do not raise air temperature more than 10 to 15 degrees.

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3. If neither of the above facilities is available, the grain should be spread in as dry a place as possible, to a depth of not more than 6 inches. Stirring and turning will speed drying and prevent hot spots and spoilage.

4. Shelled corn may be ensiled as wet grain if the moisture content ranges between 25 and 35%. If placed in a concrete stave or metal silo the grain can be held for use as livestock feed only. The reinforcing on a concrete stave silo may need to be increased unless the silo was built for grass silage. Use plastic sheets to prevent air leakage around door openings on the concrete stave silo. Cut plastic sheets to extend 4 to 6 inches beyond the door opening. A plastic cover over the grain will also be necessary in a concrete stave silo. Dig a trench around the edge of the corn and push the film down and out against the silo walls.

EAR CORN

Ear corn that has been flooded should be dried as soon as possible. Remove dry ear corn to other storage or place on high ground. If the ground is wet, cover the area with plastic or building paper. Wet ear corn can be handled as follows:

1. If facilities or equipment are available, wet ear corn can be dried. Removal from the crib may be necessary because mud and debris washed into the crib may make drying difficult or impossible. Ear corn can be placed over a drying tunnel and dried by forcing air through the corn with a crop drying fan.

2. When shelling equipment is available, possibly the ear corn can be shelled and dried as above for shelled corn.

HAY

Flooded hay will begin to heat and mold very soon after the water recedes. If it is not moved, spontaneous combustion may result within two or three days, or may be delayed for several weeks. The portion of the hay stack that has not been exposed to standing water should be moved and restacked. Wet hay should be promptly spread out to dry and turned frequently. Wet bales of hay, of course, should be opened and well spread out.

If it is possible, mechanical drying is much better and quicker. A tunnel may be constructed of dry bales of hay, and the wet hay stacked over it to a depth of not more than 10 feet. If baled hay is stacked over the tunnels, the bale ties should be broken before stacking.

Watch carefully for evidence of spontaneous combustion. If temperatures within a stack reach 185 degrees, the hot hay should be moved and spread out. Temperatures can be checked by driving a pipe into the stack and lowering a thermometer for 20 minutes. If you do not have a thermometer, temperatures may be estimated by feeling the pipe after withdrawing from the stack.

CAUTION

Oat hay that has been wet is not recommended for feed, because of possible chemical changes in the hay which may produce poison.

SILAGE

Limited experience indicates that corn silage is not greatly damaged if flood waters are drained away from around the silo soon after flooding. Watch silage for evidence of spoilage as it is removed for feeding.

For further information on this subject contact your county Extension agent.